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ABSTRACT

An informal research study was done of faculty men's perspectives concerning the Graduate Core Program in the Graduate School of Professional Studies at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. The purpose of the investigation was to determine how teaching gender-related studies affected the male faculty; what they learned about gender issues from their female colleagues who taught with them; and how these experiences affected their teaching, other work, or personal life. The faculty men interviewed (N=10) had revealed that they had some acquaintance with women's issues, that they were supportive of political expressions of feminism, and that they were ready to learn more about these issues. They claimed that teaching with confident, knowledgeable women had helped intensify and personalize what had before been rather abstract and theoretical understandings. Some of the women students in the classes reinforced ideas which the men learned from female colleagues, e.g., being demeaned, ignored, and rendered invisible by males in school and at work. The male faculty now felt themselves better informed about gender issues and to have clearer perspectives on how women view the world. They suggested including better materials on race and class problems faced by all oppressed groups. Contains nine references. (GLR)

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GENDER AND PROFESSIONAL\LIBERAL KNOWLEDGE: MEN'S PERSPECTIVES

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Faculty in the Graduate School of Professional Studies at Lewis and Clark College believe that liberal education should not stop when professional education begins, that some studies can contribute to both liberal and professional education, and that--for people in public service professions--certain fields of inquiry are of particular importance. Those areas draw heavily on the curriculum priorities of the College: gender studies, international and multicultural studies, and studies that relate technical knowledge to ethical issues. Thus the Graduate School has created a Core Program which draws on liberal disciplines as part of professional education and which applies to professional studies the College's mission priorities.

The Graduate Core Program requires students from all our five programs to take two courses which have been developed in response to the above considerations: "Individual and Societal Perspectives on Adulthood" (Core 501) and "Organizational Cultures and Professional Life" (Core 502). Students also take two weekend seminars under the general rubric of "Critical Issues in the Professions." The faculty assumes that students in all of our fields face some similar issues and that there are advantages in having students from teacher education, public administration, educational administration, counseling psychology, and special education deal with these issues in courses and seminars which include people from all these fields. By taking these courses

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and seminars with persons from these different fields, students broader their perspectives beyond their own professional boundaries.

Catalog descriptions for these seminars and courses suggest our priorities. The "Critical Issues" description says: "Seminar topics include the social construction of gender in organizations, international perspectives on the professions, ethical dilemmas of the modern professional, and intellectual development during the adult years." The description for Core 501, "Individual and Societal Perspectives on Adulthood," says: "Development is considered from multicultural, multiethnic and gender-sensitive perspectives." And the description for Core 502, "Organizational Cultures and Professional Life," says: "Organizational models and theories are critiqued using international and intercultural perspectives and gender-balanced perspectives."1

These descriptions set challenging objectives for faculty and students alike. For faculty in particular, they require that we move beyond our own professional specialties and teach material with which we may be only partly familiar. Given the demography of Lewis and Clark, it is not surprising that gender issues have received much attention during our first years as a Graduate School. A majority of our administrators and faculty are women, and most of them have had some background in women's studies or gender studies. They were thus well prepared to teach those parts of courses dealing with gender issues.

The men who have taught in our Core Program have, however, considerably less experience with gender studies. We attempt to compensate for that lack of background by, whenever possible, pairing male and female faculty for team teaching and by pairing people who have taught in the program with those who are new to it.

I first became personally concerned about this situation during the spring of 1989 when I taught Core 501 with an experienced woman colleague.[2] I apprenticed myself to her and, as a newcomer to Core, accepted her judgments concerning most of the materials and strategies which she and other colleagues had used successfully before. She tactfully took the lead in many of the gender-related discussions, and I felt that throughout the term I was learning along with the students important material from her.

This experience led me to wonder how other male faculty had ben inducted into gender-related teaching, so I decided to interview as many of them as I could on this topic. I was able to conduct 45 to 60 minute interviews with 10 (including myself) of the 16 men who have taught in the program. Seven of the men are regular faculty of the Graduate School or the College; three are adjunct instructors, one of whom had taught full-time in the Graduate School. As time permits, I would like to interview the other six men who have taught in the program, but I assume that their responses would not vary greatly from those I received.

This was rather informal research. While I started with a list of questions, I added further topics which were generated in

the course of early interviews. And some of the interviews turned into discussions as my colleagues and I shared our common or disparate experiences. The interviewing process was a source of real pleasure to me. I was able to have serious talks with men some of whom I have worked with as long as fifteen years, but with whom I have never had a thoughtful extended discussion about curriculum, materials, and teaching strategies.

My informants had had a range of experiences with Core. Some, like me, had only taught once in the program; others had taught as many as five times. The men had taught 501 a total of 8 times and 502 17 times. These numbers are consistent with a perception that 501, dealing with much personal material about adult development is a more "feminized" course than 502, which deals with organizations, many of which are male-dominated. Most of the men had taught in teams with one woman; some had taught in teams of three with two women or with another man and a woman; one had taught an off-campus core course by himself, never having taught in Core before.

My questions and the responses can be organized into five areas: I asked each man what prior experience he had had with gender issues or studies; what he had learned about gender issues from his team partner, from the materials, and from students; (this sometimes led to a discussion of how students had responded to the gender material in Core); and finally, what effect, if any, the experience had had on his teaching, other work, or personal life. I'll organize my conclusions similarly.

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH GENDER ISSUES AND STUDIES

The men I interviewed had had a range of prior experience with gender issues. Three had been students in Core classes and had found the experience meaningful enough so that they were glad to teach in the program. One of these came away from Core 501 impressed by the significance of "connected knowing," which he associated with feminine epistemology. Some of us had participated in women's studies workshops and symposia; some had team-taught with feminist women in other courses or had taught material dealing with family life; some had done research on professional ethics, which had included gender-related material.

Most had been concerned about gender issues but claimed little substantive knowledge. Some had become personally involved with gender controversies when wives and mates encountered discrimination and stereotyping. One noted that teaching in the Graduate School, with a majority of women faculty, had sensitized him to gender issues. He noted that "he had sat at tables on campus and watched men go deaf when women started to talk." Others noted that working in traditionally-female public service occupations had given them an identification with women's issues. One said he had developed a "quiet zeal" for gender equity through his experience in administration. One said that he had "had a fundamental personal commitment to equality" but that core teaching had given him his first chance to look analytically at the effects of gender in professional work. Some reported family, school, or religious environments which had prepared them to become feminists. Some

mentioned their political support for the Equal Rights Amendment, for affirmative action, and for pro-choice legislation and candidates.

My generalization from these discussions is that all the men had had some acquaintance with women's issues, that they were supportive of political expressions of feminism, and that they were ready to learn more about these issues. As one said, he was "ripe for gender studies."

LEARNING FROM WOMEN COLLEAGUES

Men learned from the course materials and from students, but testified that their greatest learning came from women colleagues. Several mentioned that team teaching partners had taught them about the functioning of women in organizations. One said that he had received "conceptual clarity" on women's roles. One noted that he now had a better understanding of relationships between feminism and ethnic issues and gay and lesbian issues. One noted that he had gained a better appreciation of the pressures which face women in society. One had learned more about the history and sociology of gender. Some mentioned increased understanding of the politics of feminism. One said that he had been shown the connections between critical theory and feminism. Another said that he had learned through modeling male/female dialogue for students in core classes and by discovering that men's and women's traditional ways of knowing could be complementary.

The general impression I received was that the men were grateful to their women colleagues for extending and deepening

their previous knowledge of women's issues and for strengthening their commitments to feminism. Teaching with confident, knowledgeable women had helped intensify and personalize what had before sometimes been rather abstract and theoretical understandings.

LEARNING FROM MATERIALS

Women faculty contributed to the education of their male colleagues partly through the materials they had selected and used in the classes. The book most frequently cited was Carol Gilligan's In A Different Voice, particularly for its emphasis on a feminine ethic of care and connection.3 One said that "Gilligan helped explain to me who I am." Nell Noddings' writing on the ethic of care, and her seminar at Lewis and Clark in the summer of 1988, reinforced what some had learned from Gilligan.4 And several mentioned the videotape "A Jury of Her Peers" as an effective dramatization of the contrast between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care.

Eleanor Bowen's Return to Laughter, used in 502, had shown some men the challenges of a female anthropologist trying to learn about men's lives in a different cultural context. R.M. Kanter's Men and Women of the Corporation had depicted analogous struggles in American society as women worked in the masculine world of business.5

Several mentioned Women's Ways of Knowing as a key book.6 One man said that the book "helped make clear to me why I felt comfortable to be in elementary school, surrounded by young

children." One had found the book helpful when he assisted a colleague in organizing a gender-related course. Another found the stages of women's voices described in the book applicable to other groups as well as to women.

Two men mentioned that Robert Kegan's The Evolving Self--although gender is not the primary focus of the book--had helped them to understand the differing ways men and women move through the life cycle.

Barbara Myerhoff's Number Our Days (and the film drawn from it) showed several men relationships between gender and ethnicity, and dramatized the differing effects of aging on men and women.7 Several mentioned Tillie Olsen's short story "Tell Me A Riddle" as personalizing some of the same issues.8 Myerhoff also underscored some of Gilligan's ideas concerning women's greater recognition of the need for connectedness as well as the pain which some men created for themselves by clinging to patterns of excessive autonomy and individualism. And this message itself was reinforced for one man by Pilisuk's and Park's The Healing Web, which shows persuasively the deep human need for strong social bonds.9

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS

Some of the women students in the classes reinforced ideas which men learned from female colleagues. In papers, journals, and class discussions, women students cited their own experiences with stereotyping and discrimination. They told of being demeaned, ignored, and rendered invisible by males in school and at work. They cited specific instances of being discouraged from

taking mathematics and science courses. Some responded to course discussions and materials with a stronger realization that they were not alone, that their experiences had been culturally determined, not individually invited. Younger students in particular, especially those who had been previously exposed to gender studies, found their continuing education in this area to be enlightening, therapeutic, and potentially useful in their careers and personal lives.

While male faculty learned from students who liked and appreciated course content and materials, they learned also from those men and women who resisted the gender emphasis of the courses. This took several forms: among males, what one man described as the stereotyped "hidebound old-boy mentality" and another the "football coach mentality" of some students. Some administrators thought that Lewis and Clark was "overplaying" gender issues. Some fundamentalists and cultural conservatives rejected the feminist orientation of the courses. Some men adopted a "passive-aggressive" stance toward gender materials.

But some women students resisted the gender material as well. Some were described as "passively compliant," while others claimed to be tired of gender studies. Some women who had achieved administrative positions did not see gender as a personal issue and felt that organizations were not as gender-biased as course materials suggested. Some said, in effect, "I've made it" and others said "I've given up on it." One woman was quoted as saying, "I'm tired of all this male-bashing crap.

It's not productive." Others said, "We're beyond that; its old stuff."

But more interesting, and more potentially useful, were the responses of those whose priorities were different. Minority women who identified more with their race than with their gender sometimes resented the time spent on gender and the relative lack of attention to minority issues.

Instructors had various explanations for these responses. Younger students, in pre-professional programs like teacher education and counseling psychology, responded more positively to gender issues, perhaps because they could see ways of applying feminist insights in their work with individuals. Some teachers judged that the students in public administration and educational administration were embedded in masculine-type organizations and not optimistic about changing them. And students in these programs are usually older, and perhaps less flexible about changing long-held beliefs and practices. One man suggested that 501, focused largely on individuals, was a source of optimism, while 502, dealing with organizations, was a source of pessimism. And if so, this would be true with gender issues as well as with other topics considered in the courses.

IMPACT ON GENDER CONSIDERATIONS OF TEACHING IN CORE

Since the men teaching in core were already committed to gender equity, affirmative action, the ERA, and choice, none described significant political or ideological shifts from working in these courses. Rather, as was suggested above, they

now felt themselves to be better informed about gender issues and to have clearer perspectives on how women view the world. One said that teaching in core had accelerated his education on gender and had made him more critical of the literature on the topic. He noted that, just as the civil rights movement had been helpful to whites as well as blacks, so gender studies were useful to men as well as women. One cited a better understanding of the way women feel when they "have to make it in a world defined by men."

Several mentioned specific effects of teaching in core, and particularly of the emphasis on gender. One, who was going through a family crisis while teaching in core, said that the readings, activities, and discussions in the class were a source of personal insight and support to him. One said that Women's Ways of Knowing had helped him assist a colleague in structuring a course she was designing. Several said that the ethic of care had influenced their thinking on moral issues. One implemented in his work a teacher training program dealing with gender expectations and student achievement. His commitment to hiring more women for administrative positions had been strengthened. One felt that he was now ready to take the lead in teaching gender and minority elements of the course instead of leaving them to a female partner. One said that Core 501, including the gender emphasis, had helped make him become a better teacher. He is more conscious of trying to empower students, gives students more control of the class, and experiences greater success. One noted that teaching Core had helped him to see some of his

residual stereotyping and had sensitized him to a greater range of differences among individuals.

NEXT STEPS

All of my male colleagues were eager to talk about ways in which the Core courses could be improved. Several cited the need for better gender materials in 502. One mentioned a desire to find more materials dealing explicitly with men's experiences. (The recent Robert Bly program on PBS might be useful for this.) Several wanted to find ways of dealing directly with student resistance--both male and female--to gender materials.

But the point made most forcefully was that while we have made a determined effort to meet institutional commitments to gender studies, we have been much less attentive to issues of social class and to multicultural and international perspectives. One man said, "We have been strikingly obtuse about and disinterested in race and class issues." He added that we claim to be preparing professionals to work in multiethnic and working-class environments, but our courses and materials don't fully reflect that commitment.

This is a serious challenge. If we take a simplistic zero-sum approach to curriculum development, this would mean reducing the focus on gender and increasing the emphasis on minority and social class issues. But this need not be the case. By including better materials on race and class we can help our students see the common problems faced by all oppressed groups. We may be able to help move students from the pessimism some feel

from these courses to a realistic optimism based on common strategies and collective action. We have failed when we have taught gender issues in isolation; we will succeed when our students see the structural economic and political causes of oppression generally and see ways of helping various subjugated groups to work together for common goals.

One man said that we need to compensate for the demographic situation we have at Lewis and Clark in which we have many women but few minorities. While we can include more minority and ethnic materials in our courses, this will continue to look hypocritical to some students as long as we maintain our current demographic patterns. But changing these patterns will not be easy. The College has had the same difficulties as most institutions in attracting and holding minority students and faculty. But we must exert whatever force we have to develop and maintain a more diverse student body, faculty, and administration. And in the meantime, through visiting consultants and field trips, we must create more meaningful encounters with minority professionals and clients in our various fields.

One blessing of gender studies is that its insights can be applied in other fields. The challenge we now face is to help our students extend to other areas the same sensitivity many now have on gender issues. We and they must be equally responsive to issues of class, race, handicap, nationality, ethnicity, language, and sexual identity. That should be challenge enough to last well into the next millenium.

NOTES

1. Catalog, 1988-89, 1898-90, Graduate School of Professional Studies, Lewis and Clark College, page 5.

2. Since people have been very frank with me in interviews and informal discussions, I will not identify them by name or program.

3. Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

4. Nell Noddings, Caring (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

5. R.M. Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

6. Mary Field Belenky et al, Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

7. Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

8. Tillie Olsen, "Tell me A Riddle."

9. Mark Pilisuk and Susan Hilliard Park, The Healing Web: Social Network and Human Survival (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986).

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6. Mary Field Belenky et al, Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

7. Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

8. Tillie Olsen, "Tell me A Riddle," in Tell me a Riddle and Other Stories (New York: Dell, 1976). First published in 1956.

9. Mark Pilisuk and Susan Hilliard Park, The Healing Web: Social Network and Human Survival (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986).